

News from Ed Markey

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BUSH PLAN NO SUBSTITUTE FOR YEARS OF PREPARATION, REP. MARKEY: 'YOU CAN'T CRAM FOR A PANDEMIC'

Washington, D.C. – Today President Bush announced a plan to address the H5N1 avian flu. The U.S. government's original plan was drafted in 1978. In August 2004, the Bush administration released a revised draft but the complete, updated version was not available until today. Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a Senior Member of the Homeland Security Committee, raised questions about the government's lack of urgency.

"Louis Pasteur once said that 'Chance favors the prepared mind.' Today, President Bush announced a plan to combat bird flu, but the reality is that our country is not as prepared as we need to be to effectively carry out his plan. As Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Wilma demonstrated, the Federal government is not prepared to minimize the deadly effects of a flu pandemic: the rapid coordination with state and local governments and the efficient delivery of health services and maintenance of public order," said **Rep. Markey**.

"You can't cram for a pandemic. Winning football teams don't start studying the playbook in the locker room before kickoff – they practice and prepare well before game time. Bird flu has spread quickly from Asia to Europe and continues to move west towards our country. Today's announcement is no substitute for the years of preparation that should have been made to ensure that medical experts, first responders, and law enforcement officers in our local communities have the resources they need to handle a national emergency that could kill an estimated one million Americans. The Bush Administration has nickel-and-dimed preparedness while writing a blank check for the war in Iraq. That is wrong, and we now must play catch-up to protect our country from a possible outbreak," said **Rep. Markey**.

"Just as the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina revealed numerous expert reports warning of the vulnerability of the levees of New Orleans, over the past five years, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Institute of Medicine and the National Vaccine Advisory Commission have all called upon the Administration to develop a national preparedness plan. Since 2000, the GAO issued six different reports on the need to develop a plan to address the event of pandemic influenza. Moreover, in his Fiscal Year 2005 budget, President Bush asked Congress to cut \$113 million from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This included \$105 million in cuts from programs to fund state and local public health preparedness. In his Fiscal Year 2006 budget, President Bush asked Congress to cut \$531 million from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This included \$130 million in cuts from programs to fund state and local public health preparedness," **Markey** concluded.

Representative Markey is calling on Congress to contribute U.S. resources to international flu pandemic preparedness efforts. Funds will augment World Health Organization activities to ensure that immediate action is taken to track, monitor, and respond to outbreaks of pandemic influenza. Markey is introducing legislation both to authorize funds and to strengthen the system for early detection by providing sanctions on any country that violates any of the World Health Organization International Health Regulations applicable to the threat of a global influenza pandemic.

For Rep. Markey's oversight letters on the avian flu and more information on his plan to take action to prevent a pandemic check out: www.house.gov/markey.

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